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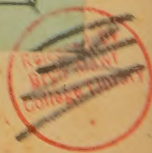


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Gifts for ministry: addresses to  
candidates for ordination



GIFTS FOR MINISTRY





# GIFTS FOR MINISTRY

ADDRESSES TO  
CANDIDATES FOR ORDINATION

BY

BROOKE FOSS WESTCOTT

EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

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THE following Addresses were given at Addington to the Candidates for Ordination in Advent 1888; and they are printed at the request of those who heard them, in the hope that hereafter, in times of anxiety and discouragement, they may bring back to them the fresh joy and faith of a season of divine consecration and strengthening.

In the stress of our own trial we need, perhaps more than anything, the conviction that GOD is still leading us on to the fulness of Truth through the teaching of the Spirit sent to us in Christ's Name. May He give us grace to welcome the lessons with reverence, and to embody them in life.

B. F. W.

CAMBRIDGE,

*St John's Day, 1888.*



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ὁ Ἰησοῦς παρακούσας τὸν λόγον λαλοῦμενον  
λέγει

Μὴ φοβοῦ, μόνον πίστευε.

ST MARK v. 36.

I.

*OUR POSITION.*

κατὰ τὸ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος ἔσωσεν ἡμᾶς διὰ λουτροῦ  
παλιγγενεσίας καὶ ὀνακαίνωσεως Πνεύματος Αγίου.

ΤΙΤ. iii. 5.

ΕΡΗ. vi. 10—20.

THERE is not one of us, I fancy, who does not sometimes recal with vivid distinctness the day of his Confirmation: the space of quiet self-questioning, of solemn instruction, of generous resolves, of lofty hopes, which went before it: the grave and tender blessing in the Service itself: the sense of a rich endowment: the awe and the joy of the first Communion. We had then a vision of the meaning and of the power of life. We were strengthened to confess our Faith, and to lay our hands upon the weapons of our spiritual warfare.

I do not wish to ask what clouds have fallen since over that glorious prospect: what disappointments, what failures, what transitory fallings away even, may have humbled and saddened us in later years. I wish to bring back again now the freshness and the vigour of that first personal acceptance of Christ's Service at this most solemn season when you are preparing yourselves to receive another 'laying on of hands'



by which you may be consecrated and endowed for the chosen work of your lives. I wish to recal the unchangeable force of the Divine promise which you then felt, the gladness of the human response which you then made, in the immediate prospect of your admission to important offices in the Church of GOD. I wish to lead you to consider the work of the Christian ministry under one aspect only, so far as it fulfils publicly and for the society that witness for Christ in character and conduct and temper, which each Christian is called to fulfil personally by his ordination for the common ministry of life.

I purpose then to take for the guidance of our thoughts on these Ember Days the Collect from the Confirmation Service which from time immemorial has expressed in the Western Church the confidence and the aspiration of the Christian: a confidence and an aspiration which gain a meaning unspeakably intense and deep when they are applied to the Christian Minister. Let me recal to you the words: 'Almighty and 'Everliving GOD, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these Thy servants by water and the 'Holy Ghost and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins; strengthen them, we

‘beseech Thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost,  
‘the Comforter, and daily increase in them Thy  
‘manifold gifts of grace; the spirit of wisdom  
‘and understanding; the spirit of counsel and  
‘ghostly strength; the spirit of knowledge and  
‘true Godliness; and fill them, O Lord, with  
‘the spirit of Thy holy fear, now and for ever.’

So the congregation gave thanks for all of us: so they prayed for all of us: so apostolic hands were laid upon all of us: so we all entered upon the fulness of our heritage in Christ: so we all recognized, if I may thus speak, our Father in His house, and in the light and strength of that Presence we all went forth, each to our work.

These prayers, these blessings, will be the subject of our meditations; but first let us recal for a few moments in silent thought that far off scene— in the School Chapel it may have been— its hopes, its resolutions; and then reflect with confessions and thanksgivings on the tender leadings by which God has brought us to today.

When we consider the structure of the Collect, we shall see that it falls into two distinct

parts. It sets before us something which has been already done ; and something which is to be our aspiration and endeavour as long as life lasts.

It describes our position as it is determined by the love of GOD, and then it displays the aim towards which we are to strive by the help of the Holy Spirit. The Church offers thanksgiving for her children as regenerate and forgiven : this is their position. She then prays for them that they may be filled in ever growing measure with the manifold gifts of grace : this is their aim. The prayer springs out of the thanksgiving. Because the life has been imparted growth is possible. Because the past has been cleansed the growth can be healthy. Because there is that which can be offered without fear and without reserve, there is the assurance that the Lord will use the offering for His own glory, that is, to make Himself more truly known. So may we feel with devout gratitude what GOD has given that we may be enabled as the days go on to receive what He still gives.

For it is in the conviction of this life, this cleansing, this devotion, and in this conviction only, that we can dare to seek the charge of the

Christian ministry. It is the will of GOD that our Christian Ministry should rest upon our Christian life. This is a main thought which I desire to suggest. In no other way can our ministry be a blessing to ourselves.

I will ask you therefore before we meditate upon the manifold endowment of the Holy Spirit which GOD prepares for us, to consider what I have spoken of as our position, to take account of that which has been already done for those who seek from Him the Great Commission.

‘Almighty and Everliving GOD,’ we say, ‘who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these Thy ‘servants by water and the Holy Ghost and ‘hast given unto them forgiveness of all their ‘sins....’

The words can never grow old. They are a declaration not of our feeling but of GOD’s doing. They are not for controversy but for thankful acceptance.

We cannot see far even into the secrets of natural life, but we must acknowledge that life has secrets which we cannot explain. We do not divest our lives of mystery when we set aside the teaching of our Faith. We are beset

by that which in one sense, if I may use the paradox, transcends experience. We are immediately conscious of two such transcendent facts. We are conscious as the days and years go on of living an unseen life: we are conscious of the permanence of the past. As surely as our bodies take substance and shape under the influences by which we are surrounded, so surely we are moulding a character which is the abiding expression of ourselves. Wounds and scars are not, as Plato has told us, more distinct in the material frame than are, in the way of nature, the marks of sin upon the soul. In themselves both these facts, the fact of the mysterious, unseen life, the fact of the irrevocableness of action, are of momentous meaning. In themselves they seem to be sufficient to darken hope. But our Faith comes to us in our distress. It addresses us as regenerate and forgiven. In this connexion terms which party strife and fanaticism have too often discredited gain a living, healing, sustaining force. We learn that by the loving act of GOD that unseen life has been brought into fellowship with Christ's life, the life of the Son of Man. We learn that Christ can transfigure, according to His good

pleasure, what we have done and fashion us anew, whom He is not ashamed to call brethren, after His own likeness. In the light of these truths the unseen becomes the inspiration of our earthly endeavours. The past becomes the seed which dies that it may spring up into a nobler life.

Regenerate and forgiven. The words are not, as I have said, for controversy; and they are not for theory. They are for use. And this is their virtue. They take us out of ourselves. They rest our confidence upon the work of GOD. His love, and not our own doing or feeling, is the solid foundation of our trust. All life—the spiritual life no less than the natural life—is in its origin independent of him who receives it. It is, it must be, a free gift. He who acts in any way lives already. This then is clear: we cannot create our life, but we can, so He wills, put into exercise the powers of life. We cannot undo the past, but, in obedience to the voice of Christ, we can come forth from the grave. The old bands are ineffective to fetter against His voice. The miracles of physical healing which He wrought on earth are, as it were, sacraments of that greater spiritual power which is active

about us through the Paraclete sent in His name.

Regenerate and forgiven. The words are not for controversy or for theory. And yet again they are not of application only to some distant time, separated from us, it may be, by a dreary and terrible waste of lost years. They are of immediate and prevailing force.

Brethren, 'called,' as you and we trust, 'by the 'Holy Ghost to take upon you the office and 'ministration of Deacons and Priests in the 'Church of GOD, to serve Him for the promoting 'of His glory and the edifying of His people,' let them ring in your ears now, as a call to effort and a pledge of power. What GOD has once done remains unchangeable. What He has once willed for you is still possible. He charges you now again to strive forward, not in your own strength but in His: to forget that which is behind, not as underrating its importance but as believing in the breadth of His counsel. He does not encourage you to dissemble one mystery of being, or to think lightly of one failure; but He does bid you live because He has given you life: He does bid you move gladly, because in Him in Whom you are no evil can find place. Here is



the life for use: here is the fellowship for purification. All is of Him, from Him, in Him, and not of yourselves.

This, then, is your position. This is your confidence. This is your strength. If you had to look to yourselves you might well shrink from seeking to be what GOD wills you to be, ministers through whom He works, ministers whom by His working He makes like Himself.

Whom He makes like to Himself: yes: it is nothing less than this to which everyone of us is called. The prayer, which expresses our desires is, as we shall see, an application to ourselves of the prophetic portraiture of the Divine King. We are called to be 'imitators of GOD.' When Gentile philosophers said that the aim of man was *ἐξομοιοῦσθαι τῷ θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν*, they echoed the words of the prophets: they anticipated the message of the Gospel. This is the destiny of men made possible for each man since Christ has fulfilled it for all. Every Christian in his particular place, according to his peculiar endowments, is, in the language of St John, 'a Christ' blessed by the Spirit for his special work in the whole Body. It is in and through Christians—most moving thought—that

Christ is revealed now. It is from Christians that the world will judge of His present power. And what shall I say of Christian ministers? They are at once the voice and the standard of the congregation. In us—and will not the fact stir us to efforts which we have not yet made?—the popular judgment of the Faith is perilled.

In order then that the world may not be fatally misled, GOD grant that we may use to the uttermost what He has already given to us, wholly forgetting ourselves in the sight of His love—regenerate and forgiven. GOD grant that we may now again be strengthened by the thought of His work: strengthened by confessing one to another the deep desires of our hearts which are stifled by silence: strengthened by combination in some effort which may make the power of our Faith visible: strengthened by the contemplation of spiritual things which are able to shew their glory through every simplest duty.

II.

*THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND  
UNDERSTANDING.*

ἵνα πληρωθῇτε τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ θελήματος  
αὐτοῦ ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ καὶ συνέσει πνευματικῇ.

COL. i. 9.

EPH. i. 15—23.

WE have considered the privileges of the position in which we have been placed by the love of GOD, the new life in which we are made partakers, the forgiveness of sins by which we are freed from the burden of the past. We have acknowledged that these Divine gifts are not for controversy but for glad welcome, not for theory but for use, not for any remote crisis in our experience but for immediate blessing. In the thought of these we found the ground of our thanksgiving. And all real thanksgiving at once passes into prayer even as prayer passes into thanksgiving. As soon as we feel what GOD has already done we are emboldened to ask that *He who has begun the good work* will carry it on to completion. And so here, when we have thanked GOD, we go on to pray that the Spirit by Whom we have been quickened may sustain and strengthen and guide our growth, and 'daily'—daily—'increase in us His manifold gifts of grace.'

In shaping this prayer we venture to take for our ideal as I have already noticed the portraiture which Isaiah has drawn of the Divine King<sup>1</sup>. In other words we accept that which Christ has shewn in His own Person—nothing less—as the end of our efforts. The command to be *perfect as GOD is perfect, holy as GOD is holy*, is brought very near to us in the life of the Lord: and through the lesson of the Incarnation we can understand how even such a command becomes a promise fulfilled in fellowship with Him and His sufferings. He lives still in His Body, the Church, and His life is the life of each one of us in particular. *Because He lives we shall live also* with ever-growing energy of power. *Because we are sons, GOD sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts*: ‘the spirit of wisdom  
‘and understanding, the spirit of counsel and  
‘ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and  
‘true godliness: and, throughout every energy  
‘of our whole being, the pervading, hallowing

<sup>1</sup> *There shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit; and the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.* Is. xi. 1 ff.

‘spirit of godly fear.’ This is our original endowment as Christians; and now our petition is that day by day we may as Christian ministers be brought into more complete possession of it, in order that we may use it more effectively in the fulfilment of our special office, as ‘Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the Lord,’ as men for whom each common gift is not neutralised by their peculiar grace but hallowed with a diviner force.

We go on then to meditate more in detail on that of which GOD has already given us the firstfruits, in order that we may claim, with a better sense of our needs and of His purpose, the fulness of His bounty.

As we do this we observe at once that this sevenfold spirit, which is the progressive strength of the new life, reaches to thought and action and feeling: to our inward discipline (‘wisdom and understanding’), to our dealings with men (‘counsel and might’), to our approach to GOD (‘knowledge and true godliness’ and ‘holy fear’): in short to every region of human activity. It must do so. Nothing that truly belongs to us as men is incapable of hallowing: nothing therefore is unclaimed by GOD. The power of Christ



*even to subject all things to Himself* finds its application in the life, in the whole life, of every believer. And this is the central practical truth which as Christian Ministers we have first to master for ourselves in its unlimited scope, and then to bring home to our people, sure indeed of this that we and they alike shall be learners in the school of the Spirit while life lasts.

The gifts of the Spirit, the workings of the Spirit, are coextensive, I have said, with our nature. They are indeed in themselves one gift, one working, the self-communication of the Divine, differenced by its application to our several powers; but we shall best realise them by following the division and the order in which they are presented to us in our prayer. First therefore we must touch upon that two-fold gift of grace which is our personal inspiration, 'the 'spirit of wisdom and understanding.'

We can easily see why this is placed in the forefront. We must begin from within. Things are for us according to our powers of interpreting them. Our life is as we are. We ourselves enter into every thought which we fashion and into every impression which we receive. Things

without us are simply the occasions, the materials, which we use, each according to our several ability. It is then vital to us that we should know how to use them. To this end we need more than we are ready to confess the first gift of the Holy Ghost, 'the spirit of wisdom and understanding.'

Wisdom and understanding form, as I just said, a twofold gift. They are twin graces. Perhaps we shall best distinguish the two by saying that wisdom is the power of regarding things as they are in themselves, and understanding the power of discerning their true relations as they come before us. Wisdom deals properly with that which is spiritual and moral—with principles: understanding with that which is earthly and intellectual—with embodiments. We require both. We are on the one hand—it is the witness of experience—in continual danger of being distracted and deceived by the surface of things, by the show of busy energy and the return of quick results: the spirit of wisdom discloses a larger, deeper, serener view of life and duty. And on the other hand we are in continual danger of being perplexed and confused by rival paths which

profess to lead to the same end, by conflicting schemes which challenge our sympathy, by half-truths which offer themselves on this side and that to claim our absolute allegiance: then the spirit of understanding brings back order and harmony to our purposes and efforts.

Wisdom, to sum up in other words what has been said, deals with that which *is*: understanding deals with that which is presented to us. Wisdom is the support of faith, and understanding is the preparation for action.

Let us look at the two a little more closely.

Wisdom, we read, *the wisdom that cometh from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intricated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy.*

No thought of self troubles the clearness of its vision. No thought of victory provokes in it the pride of self-assertion. It strives to enter into the thoughts of others that it may gain the truth by which they are strong. It needs no constraint to recognise the force of a righteous plea. It is naturally fertile in blessings of tenderness and power, free from the weariness

of irresolute waverings, and the shame of false disguises.

Such is wisdom ; and, as we contemplate the portraiture, can we not feel how sorely we all need the grace in our controversies, our aims, our judgments, our interpretations of history, our estimates of labour.

By the spirit of wisdom we are taught to change our point of sight with regard to present controversies, and to contemplate them already as they will appear to some future generations. Thus shall we best guard ourselves against placing by our wilfulness one stone of stumbling in the way of those who will come after us.

By the spirit of wisdom we are taught to discern the springs of human joy deep in the foundations of universal humanity and not in our possessions of place, or wealth, or intellect, out of their abundance.

By the spirit of wisdom we are taught to pierce through the conventional disguises of men to the common human soul which lies beneath and to call out its testimony to the kindred truth for which it was made.

By the spirit of wisdom we are taught to trace the Divine purpose, the age-long revelation

of the will of GOD in the records of national life, a purpose of love to which the Church, in all its parts and in all its varieties of service, is the abiding witness.

By the spirit of wisdom we are taught to wait without impatience and without indolence, though events and persons seem to be against us, till she is at last *justified of all her works and of all her children*.

Such, I repeat, is wisdom: such are some of its workings. For a few moments let us think silently how we have turned from it, how we need it in the performance of our own duties, and shape each thought into an act of penitence or an act of supplication, which will not be in vain.

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The spirit of wisdom, as we have seen, lifts us above earth that we may obtain a nearer approach to the eternal both in regard to the individual soul and in regard to the society, that we may gain a calm, clear prospect of things as they are. And when our loftiest faith has thus found that whereon it can rest in

assured hope, the spirit of understanding helps us to give shape to the truth on which we have looked, according to our special circumstances.

It helps us to acknowledge how little a part of all that we have seen we can ourselves hope to embody ; and yet it encourages us to labour gladly that we may bring that fragment before men.

It helps us to acknowledge the necessity of diversities of operations for the fulfilment of the Divine counsel, and yet it confirms us in the assertion of that which we know.

It helps us to acknowledge that imperfections of earthly organisation force us to seek our fullest realisation of union in the unseen, and yet it shews us in all its beauty the blessing of outward fellowship.

It trains us to discern the proportions between the different parts which go to form that whole for which we rejoice to labour.

It saves us from those hasty judgments, those enslavements to party, which often condemn whole lives either to thoughtless insincerity or to a late repentance.

It guides us to the real point under debate

in questions of controversy, and keeps us from following side issues, in which that which is at stake is not unfrequently forgotten.

‘The spirit of wisdom and understanding.’ Can we hope for it as we contemplate its working?—Can we hope for it? Nay, my friends, if we grasp in any degree the meaning of our Faith, it must be as the very breath of our lives. The thought of Christ Born, Crucified, Risen, Ascended, must, if we give it scope, illuminate our view of humanity and of the world. How popular estimates of poverty and wealth, of ignorance and knowledge, of authority and obedience, of death and life, are transformed under its influence. How our differences, though I would not disparage the least element of truth which has been clothed in an earthly dress, sink into insignificance before our common confession, that *the Word became flesh*. How those two words of St Paul ‘*in Christ*’ give a solid foundation to the vague feeling after the fatherhood of GOD and the brotherhood of men, which is at present the pathetic expression of ‘souls naturally Christian.’ How they come back to us when we are baffled, wearied, discouraged, with minds darkened by clouds of human misery and crime,



and eyes dimmed by straining for the dawn. *In Christ*: here lies the fresh spring of wisdom and understanding. *In Christ* nothing is lost, nothing is ineffective, nothing dies but that it may rise to a more fertile life. *In Christ* our least glimpse of the Truth falls into its due place in the limitless prospect of the love of GOD. *In Christ* our least labour becomes a part of a Divine ministry.

And yet we know too well what occasions the ministers of Christ have given to the enemies of the Faith to charge them with narrowness of view, with littleness of aim, with blindness to the real feelings and hopes and trials of men, with lack of interest in the practical business of life.

So far as such charges are true they convict us of ignorance of our Gospel. We have not apprehended *the breadth and length and height and depth*. That indeed in the fullest sense we cannot do. But we can pray that *the GOD of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of our heart enlightened that we may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory*

*of His inheritance in the Saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, to us to whom is entrusted the word of reconciliation, the word of life.*

III.

*THE SPIRIT OF COUNSEL AND  
MIGHT.*

γρηγορεῖτε, στήκετε ἐν τῇ πίστει, ἀνδρίζεσθε,  
κραταιοῦσθε.

I COR. xvi. 13.

COL. i. 3—11.

THE first gift of grace through which we seek for strength and growth in the conduct of our Christian life and in the fulfilment of our Christian ministry is, as we have seen, 'the spirit of wisdom and understanding,' the power to see things as they are in their eternal being, and the power to regard them rightly as they are presented to us under the conditions of earth. We need wisdom for the support of the soul in guarding its fairest ideals: we need understanding for the right discernment of our own reasonable service. But we do not rest in any mental result however noble. GOD is fire as well as light. Truth is given to us as the ground and the guide of action. 'I act, therefore I am' in the language of one of our great Cambridge teachers, and, not 'I think, therefore I am,' is the sign of our manhood. There are truths, Divine truths, which our Father *hides from the wise and*

*understanding and reveals unto babes.* If we allow, as we must do, that action without knowledge is lifeless and precarious, we allow also that knowledge without action is maimed and fruitless. And therefore the prayer for a personal, mental endowment is followed by the prayer for a social, practical endowment. We ask that GOD will increase in us not only the spirit of wisdom and understanding, but also 'the spirit of counsel and might.'

This then is the subject of our meditation now: 'the spirit of counsel and might.' When we come to deal with men and take our part in affairs, we need guidance in shaping our methods of proceeding: we need guidance in carrying our plans to a successful issue. Without might counsel is ineffective: without counsel might is blind. The double gift which answers to our prayer meets all the necessities of action.

We take then the spirit of counsel first. When we see our end clearly it often happens that we think only of pressing on to it ourselves directly and swiftly. But the way of reaching the goal is hardly of less importance than the goal itself. As we desire to carry others with us we must spare no pains to find the path which

they can follow<sup>1</sup>. The truest leader again is he who calls into energetic service the powers of all that come within his influence. And once more, he who has thought out his plan most carefully will best bear the trial of delay and disappointment. Considerateness, co-operation, patience, all these spring from the spirit of counsel.

Considerateness. Is there one of us whose experience does not suggest occasions when he has impaired the power of the Truth in his very jealousy for it? We are impatient or peremptory when our clear and mature and well-weighed opinions are questioned. We hastily interpret

- 1 .....We bring  
 Only ourselves! we lost  
 Sight of the rest in the storm.  
 Hardly ourselves we fought though,  
 Stripped, without friends, as we are.  
 Friends, companions, and train  
 The avalanche swept from our side.  
     But thou would'st not *alone*  
 Be saved, my Father! *alone*  
 Conquer and come to the goal,  
 Leaving the rest in the wild.....  
 Therefore to thee it was given  
 Many to save with thyself;  
 And, at the end of thy day,  
 O faithful shepherd! to come  
 Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

M. ARNOLD.

and resent words hastily spoken. We press by force of authority that which can be better commended by its intrinsic claim. We turn aside from an affected indifference which is not unfrequently the veil of anxious interest. We make no effort to understand the position of those who regard the object of our convictions from a different point of sight. We do not watch for opportunities which will interpret our message. We do not, in a word, become all things to all men, providing with watchful care that men shall not take our personal views as the measure of the Faith.

In all this, in our haste, in our self-confidence, in our restlessness for the assertion of our own cause, in our blunt disregard of circumstances and characters, we want that considerateness which comes from the spirit of counsel. It seems sometimes—have we not felt the miserable temptation?—that we care more for ourselves than for our message: that, if we cannot deliver it in our own way, we are contented that it should be undelivered. So it is that the Truth itself suffers; and our hardness becomes a fruitful source of failure in our work.

In this way we lose, and justly lose, our



influence by lack of tenderness for others; and then again our work is marred by our lack of trust in others. This fault also comes from our want of the spirit of counsel. The spirit of counsel which moves us to considerateness moves us to co-operation. And what we call our 'just independence' needs a powerful force to overcome it. In strength or in weakness, we proudly or despondingly depend upon ourselves. We do not courageously demand of our friend the help which he can give. Perhaps—most humiliating thought—we fear that we shall be neglected through his more conspicuous service, forgetting the last-recorded words of the Baptist's public ministry, which must surely stir in us a more generous temper: *He must increase, but I must decrease.* Or perhaps we shrink from preferring a request which may be unwelcome or troublesome, forgetting that he who loves another as himself will not deny him the blessing which he has proved. If we have ourselves known the joy which comes from sacrifice we shall surely not be unwilling to ask another to share our joy. Nothing, I think, more weakens the force of the Christian life than this isolation. By striving to stand alone we suffer loss and we

bring loss to those who are about us. If we can offer ourselves gladly to do Christ's work, we must learn to look naturally for like devotion in others, and to confess our hope boldly. As we do so—perhaps we have already felt the blessing—our weakness will find strength: our little service will be ennobled by the manifold services which it has called out.

And here we shall, I think, all confess that we ministers of Christ's Church have not in times past asked enough of our people. We have kept too much to ourselves the privilege of social service. But if the Church—and each congregation in its measure—is the Body of Christ, its health requires the proper action of every part. If we are to win men, we must not rest till by the help of the spirit of counsel we have found some office for every member of the society which we serve, and charged each with the fulfilment of his peculiar duty; for the privilege of sacrifice is the strongest bond which binds together fellow-workers to a great cause.

Such an end will not be soon reached; but the spirit of counsel which is able to inspire us with that delicate sympathy, which is the self-surrender of love, and with that bold demand for

support, which is the self-assertion of love, is also the great master of patience. They can wait without losing hope who have studied the way of redemption. The more we look at the fulfilment of the will of GOD the more clearly do we seem to find that one law holds good of every seed of progress, *Except it die, it abideth by itself alone*. A season of darkness, of waiting, of wintry cold, follows the sowing of that which we know to be fruitful. But the harvest will come, and the true spiritual husbandman is patient, is *long-suffering over it* (μακροθυμῶν ἐπ' αὐτῷ), bearing without murmur the disappointment of reasonable hope.

Perhaps we are tempted to think that our patience is in the present day put to a trial of unexampled severity. If it is so, let us remember that to us has been given also fresh insight into the work of GOD in time. We can contemplate, as our fathers could not do, the innumerable ages which passed before the world was slowly fashioned to be a home for man : the ages which passed before humanity was ready for the Christ. And as we do so, we shall cease to wonder that we have learnt in eighteen centuries so little of the meaning of the Incarnation.

In the realm of nature and in the realm of

grace, which are indeed one originally and finally, taught by the spirit of counsel we recognise the manifestation of one Truth. The Divine love hastens nothing. And GOD offers to us this lesson of the ages for our personal strengthening. Of all the promises of Holy Scripture the one to which I feel inclined to turn oftenest is that which declares the victory of patience for each believer. When the Lord foreshewed to His disciples the trials which they would have to face, the convulsions of kingdoms and the terrors of persecution, He added this word as the transformation of every sorrow: *In your patience ye shall win your souls* (ἐν τῇ ὑπομονῇ ὑμῶν κτήσεσθε τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν). Yes: that which seems to be most certainly our own, has first to be mastered, and patience is the power of victory.

In silence let us think for a little space on these blessings of the spirit of counsel, consideration, coöperation, patience.

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The spirit of might is bound up in GOD's gift with the spirit of counsel. He who is taught to watch, to rouse, to wait, that he may together

with his own soul win the souls of other men, never ceases to work. He admits the necessity of conflict. He acknowledges the duty of aggression. He rejoices in the promise of victory.

He who is inspired by the spirit of might admits, I say, the necessity of conflict. He remembers the Lord's words, *Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace but a sword.* But how little do we commonly take this fact to heart. We think it strange if the good which we shew does not find a universal welcome: we are tempted to doubt if the enthusiasm which has fired us dies away. But it stands written for us also that *we must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God. It is for chastening, for discipline, that we endure.* Opposition without, coldness within, reveal the Father to us, strong to fulfil His purpose, strong to confirm our hearts. If we feel no difficulties, no misgivings, then we may well fear. But as long as we do feel ourselves pressed on every side and perplexed, GOD is preparing the way for His Spirit; and He who turns his trials into acts of sacrifice will find the condition of conflict an opportunity. For conflict reveals our strength.

You will meet hereafter with many who will ask you for a proof of your faith. Perhaps you will look round vainly on many sides till you discover that you have in your own power the one proof which cannot be gainsaid. The Faith claims to be a power of life, and it must, it can, vindicate its claim. That is enough; but, if we are successfully to hold our position, it can only be while we are able to use the words of Tertullian: *non magna loquimur sed vivimus*.

The Christian—the Christian teacher—admits the necessity of conflict. And more than this, he accepts the duty of aggression. It is a duty. We think indeed too commonly of ourselves rather than of GOD, and so it happens that as Christians we habitually take up the attitude of defence and not that of attack. We come to think of our Faith as something which is exposed to countless assaults, surprises, even losses. We are almost contented to be let alone. Yet conviction must be aggressive. That which we enjoy is available for all men. It is entrusted to us that we may bring it to all men. We have a Gospel to announce. And the soul which is awakened to the vast sorrows and the vast possibilities of life will still, I believe, as in old

times, recognise it as the answer to its inarticulate cry. Meanwhile at any rate he who bears the message in this confidence will realise in glad experience that he is not charged to withstand only but to conquer, not only to keep an anxious guard over inherited treasures but to win new powers within him and without him for Christ's dominion and his own wider ministry.

In this temper of glad confidence he who is inspired by the spirit of might will watch on every side for fresh signs of the ways of God's working as they are made known to us, for fresh revelations of beauty and wonder which other students disclose.

He will not be hasty to decide what can be or cannot be. He will not lay down the conclusions which the critic or the physicist is to reach. He will await the issue of every inquiry without anxiety, convinced of this that every truth is his.

So it is that the spirit of might carries with it the promise of victory. He who feels it will never forget that he belongs to that host of which Christ said that *the gates of Hades should not prevail against it*. And surely that is not an image of successful resistance, but of triumphant

progress. It is not the assurance that we shall be enabled to maintain a beleaguered citadel, sore pressed till relief comes, but that we shall, under our Great Captain, bear down every opposing force of evil. Onward through the ages, slowly as the spirit of counsel shall guide, irresistibly as the spirit of might shall nerve, the army of Christ shall move, till the last stronghold of death falls before it and yields up its captives.

This is our hope ; and nothing less. This is our final aim : this is our final work. In and for this we bring the service of our little lives, strong with the strength of Him in Whom we are, commending our Faith to willing hearers by the spirit of counsel, approving its power to adversaries by the spirit of might.



IV.

*THE SPIRIT OF KNOWLEDGE AND  
TRUE GODLINESS.*

Εἰ ταῦτα οἶδατε, μακάριοί ἐστε ἐὰν ποιῇτε αὐτά.

ST JOHN xiii. 17.

I JOHN v. 13—21.

WE have considered the personal endowment of the Christian, and specially of the Christian Minister, by which he is enabled to gain a true view of things and of his own relation to them, the spirit of wisdom and understanding. We have considered his social endowment, by which he is enabled to fashion and carry into execution wise plans for the fulfilment of his duty to others, the spirit of counsel and might. We have still to consider his attitude towards GOD: how he is to realise in a continuous progress that knowledge of the Father and of the Son which is eternal life, and to obtain an abiding consecration for all he does and is. To this end we ask for a further gift of the spirit of grace, for 'the spirit of knowledge and true 'godliness,' and having done this we close our prayer with the far-reaching petition that we

may 'be filled with the spirit of holy fear, now and ever.'

Knowledge, godliness, holy fear, these three then form the sum of our spiritual endowment. And we may, I think, distinguish between them as they are brought before us in the prayer. The first two describe the distinct embodiment and manifestation of religious conviction, and the third that pervading power by which GOD moulds the whole character within to conformity and fellowship with Himself.

I propose then to take now for our consideration 'the spirit of knowledge and true godliness,' and to reserve for to-morrow the thought of holy fear.

We shall at once perceive why knowledge and true godliness are joined together as the gift of the same Spirit. Just as in action so in worship,—using the word in its widest sense,—there are two parts necessary for the right issue. We must in both cases think rightly in order that we may do rightly. Counsel goes before might. Knowledge goes before godliness. True belief quickens worship: active worship reveals the power of true belief. Without the spirit of knowledge, routine, formality, superstition, usurp

the place of true godliness. Without the spirit of true godliness, knowledge degenerates into an intellectual theory. Therefore GOD stirs us to know that thought may never want an object for effort. Therefore He calls us to worship that we may never separate the highest Truth from its practical destination.

Thus St John writes: *The Son of God hath come and hath given us an understanding that we may know* (ἵνα γινώσκωμεν, -ομεν) *Him that is true*—there is growing intelligence—and *we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ*—there is the vital power of Faith.

When we reflect upon the nature of this knowledge it will appear at once that the knowledge of which we speak, the knowledge which flows from the Spirit of the Lord, is personal, progressive, and, if I may use the word, plastic.

It is personal. It is a knowledge of experience and not of tradition. Our desire, our strength, is not to know about GOD but to know GOD. And so He has been pleased to offer Himself to us, speaking and working still as in old time, that through His words and

works we may learn, learn ever better as life goes on, His character and His will. Our Creed is not a series of abstract statements but a record of facts wrought on the earth. GOD in His Son has taken humanity to Himself. All that really is, is in Him. All Creation, all History, is therefore capable of becoming to us a revelation of Him. Through Nature, through life, we can enter into converse with Him. The Incarnation has, for the believer, lifted the veil from material things. But he must read with his own eyes and not another's the lessons which lie beneath.

This Truth, which must be cherished by every Christian, is vital for the Christian teacher. He is in peculiar danger of resting in a traditional and, if I may say so, a formal, a professional, knowledge of Divine things. He is conversant with words; and it is always easy to use words for things. He therefore above all men must study and reflect with open eye and open soul that he may offer to others the direct result of his own experience. His witness must be of the things which he has seen, seen with *the eyes of his heart*.

It follows necessarily that the knowledge

which is thus gained personally, by each man for himself, is progressive. Indeed what is given to us is not knowledge but the means of knowing: the assurance of the presence of Him Whom we are to know; who through His Son comes to us as friend to friend. Such knowledge, like life itself, would cease to be if it were stationary. Holding therefore, as we do, that all Creation and all History, no less than the personal experience of our own selves, half veils and half discloses GOD in Christ, we believe that everything which we learn from day to day of the world and of life may be made to teach us something of Him in Whom we and all things have our being. There is about us and within us that which may grow eloquent of Him, if we bring to stillness the tumult of our passions: or, most sad alternative, we may hear this tumult only. For, as I said before, the world is to us as we ourselves are. And GOD Himself is to us as the world is, as our souls are, through which we know Him. If then our view of the world and of life be poor and mean and hard and unloving, so too will be our view of GOD. If on the other hand we are sure that behind that which can be seen and handled lie the

glorious realities of absolute beauty and love, the thought of GOD will become for us the most sovereign of all thoughts, a spring of grace and truth.

But that it may continue to be so, the thought itself must live and move. We all know how our childly ideas of heavenly things have passed without any abrupt break into new and nobler shapes. The same process must go on still to the end. *Grace for grace*, fresh grace in return for grace well used, is the law of Divine revelation. Clear, sharp outlines are only provisional though they are necessary. As soon as we treat an opinion as final it loses its inspiring virtue.

Meanwhile the knowledge which grows with our growth will be plastic. It will, I mean, mould us after its likeness. We shall reflect in our own character the character which we habitually regard. We are in the startling phrase of St Paul *delivered to the form of doctrine* which we hold (*εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδαχῆς*). The form of doctrine, that is, becomes our absolute master. But the Christian is not delivered to any inflexible law. He serves the living Lord who redeemed him. And for him



all doctrine is summed up in the Word, *Who was in the beginning, and Who was God, and Who became flesh.*

Now we all know what is the influence of a noble friend : how we are roused, raised, purified by his companionship. And the spirit of knowledge opens our eyes, as we have seen, to the reality of a Divine fellowship : it changes all things in their measure into sacraments of an invisible grace : it quickens our deadness by contact with the energy of GOD'S working. Our sight may be dim and our hearing may be dull, but use will train our poor faculties to keener discernment. The sight of GOD is indeed the life of man. And while I said before that as the man is such will be his view of GOD, there is a converse to the Truth. As the man sees GOD such is the man himself. Hereafter, we know, we shall be transformed by the open vision of Him as He is, but even here there is the opportunity of change *from glory to glory* as we contemplate His image. We may indeed venture to say that the sight of GOD makes man as he truly is :

For of the soul the body form doth take,  
For soul is form and doth the body make.

It must be so. To feel for GOD, to look for Him, to listen for His voice—which cannot be in vain—is to have found that which will turn temptation into a spring of strength: to have found that without us through which the inward law of conscience can be fulfilled, and the immutable ideal slowly realised.

Here then we can recognise the power and the value of doctrine. It is not an end but a means. It is not something to be rested in but something to be used as a help to a fuller and more effective service of GOD.

The last word of the Lord on knowledge the most absolute and the most true is this: *If ye know these things* (εἰ ταῦτα οἴδατε), *blessed are ye if ye do them.* The knowledge of GOD and of His will is then only a blessing when it makes the believer more like Him.

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The spirit of knowledge, as we have just seen, has its perfect work, in conforming the believer to GOD, and that work becomes visible in true godliness. He who knows GOD in any degree as the present, sustaining Creator and

Preserver of all that is, cannot but bear himself with patient and loving reverence in the face of the vast mysteries of Nature, of the solemn realities, the sorrows and the joys, of life; and he will make his own feeling felt. He will move about, of necessity, as seeing the invisible, and others will learn to look for that which he shews to be real.

Under this aspect we can recognise the momentous importance to others no less than to ourselves of the manner of our public ministrations. In these men see, so far as the eye reaches, with what care, with what preparedness, with what self-concentration, we draw near to GOD. They cannot but form a judgment, even unconsciously, of what indeed we look for and what we find; and that judgment will be more effective on their conduct than any of our words.

We must therefore, in St Paul's language, *exercise ourselves unto godliness*. We must use vigorous discipline in order that we may realise constantly in what Presence we are, and use the means which are offered to us for making our sense of the Divine Majesty distinct. If such grace be given to us, we shall shew in a thousand

ways, without affectation and without effort, what sacred places and sacred things mean for us, what art means; how the best and most beautiful, and noblest of material things bid us look beyond them for that to which they bear witness.

The sight of GOD, I said, is the life of man, and, Irenæus adds, 'a living man is the glory of GOD.' A man, that is, whose life is worship makes GOD known. And to this life we are called specially. To us the knowledge is given which the life writes out legibly, and given that it may be written out by us for men to read. That we may obey the call we have need of method and discipline. Such obedience will cost us something always: it will cost us much at first. As we strive towards it we must watch for opportunities of fixing the attitude, the habit, of worship in our minds. We must continually check ourselves in work and in amusement that we may for one moment look to the Eternal. The stream of men and women through which we pass, books charged with undying thoughts, autumn leaves, 'the light of setting suns,' the sombre outline of the Church in which we minister against the starry sky, all sights and sounds, are messengers to us.

They are able to summon forth the swift response of prayer that the work—the fulfilment of GOD'S will—to which they severally move us and others, may be done; of thanksgiving that we have been allowed to see GOD through them.

And if by the Divine gift through the spirit of true godliness, we are trained to hear and to answer these heavenly voices as they come, what fulness of desire, what richness of emotion, what power of sympathy, we shall bring to our common services: how the revelation of the Holy Communion will come home to us, in which we confess that the commonest things of earth are made channels of Divine grace: in which we confess the love of GOD not only to us but to the world.

The vision of GOD is the life of man: that is the fountain of knowledge.

A living man is the glory of GOD: that is the inspiration of godliness.

And if when these convictions rise like beacon-lights before our souls, we at once turn to them 'to praise and pray,' the spirit of knowledge and true godliness—let us not doubt but earnestly believe—will little by little bring to us the truth to which we have now dared to lift

up our eyes, bring to us the temper which we have dared to regard as alone befitting men.

Vita hominis visio Dei: gloria Dei vivens homo.

V.

*THE SPIRIT OF HOLY FEAR.*

ἐπιτελοῦντες ἁγιωσύνην ἐν φόβῳ θεοῦ.

2 COR. vii. 1.

HEBR. xii. 18—29.



THERE is something of touching solemnity in the close of the prayer which we have been considering: *fill them, O Lord, with the spirit of Thy holy fear, now and for ever.* We have already sought for the spirit through which we may form a right judgment on things: through which we may embody in deed the ripe results of thought: through which we may bring thought and deed into living connexion with Him in Whom we live. We have sought all this, and it might seem that we could rest in the assurance of blessing answering to our petitions. But a truer, deeper instinct finds expression. When we have received the richest endowment we need still, perhaps we need then most, to feel the sovereign Majesty of GOD: to recognise that each gift which shines brightest on earth, shines only by reflecting a fragment of His Light: to find our dignity in the power of reverence, in the sense of reasonable awe. And

so we add one more request which crowns all. We seek for an inspiration which shall hallow every offering of service: for *the spirit of the fear of the Lord*, which shall be according to the most probable interpretation of the original phrase of Isaiah, as the very breath of our nostrils, the element which quickens and purifies our vital force from moment to moment.

‘Fill us, O Lord,’ we say, ‘with the spirit of ‘Thy holy fear.’ We do not as in the other cases simply ask for the gift. We suggest the measure in which we require it. We ask for that which shall be the pervading power in our whole nature, which shall as it were flood us with its influence; and being what we are it is well that we should make the prayer. Our personal relation to GOD, His Presence with and in us, is more than any endowment, or rather it includes all endowments in their potency, and is necessary for all that they may be beneficent.

*The fear of the Lord*: this must be, if we reflect upon it, a power to protect, to discipline, to ennoble. There is indeed a slavish fear which depresses and degrades. Fear which is merely the correlative of might has no moral

value. But, on the other hand, the creature is not capable of any loftier emotion than that which is stirred by the contemplation of absolute purity and goodness and beauty. Companionship with GOD is an awful privilege, but the fact that man is capable of it reveals what he was made for. To be able to measure in some sense the chasm by which we are separated from Him to whom our soul is taught to rise, is to feel our destiny: to be stirred afresh to strain towards attainment.

The fear of the Lord can I say protect us. And the whole tendency of modern thought reveals the necessity of our seeking the influence of this holy fear. Men have drawn from the successes and the limitations of physical research a self-confidence and also a self-condemnation which requires the sobering and the sustaining force of a reverence able to guard and to raise the soul. We all feel something of pride in reflecting on the rapid progress which is being made about us towards an intelligent control of material forces, and we need to realise how little of all that is lies within the scope of our powers: and again we all are saddened from time to time by the spectacle of

suffering which appears to be beyond hope, and we need to realise that a Divine counsel is going on to fulfilment about us in which we can rest with perfect trust. We are all, once more, tempted by the pleadings of weakness to acquiesce in wrong as an evil which must be borne, and we need to realise that it is in every shape a rebellion against GOD, Who does not leave Himself without witness.

These are our peculiar trials. The spirit of holy fear can, as I said, protect us against them. Even the fear of punishment, the fear which springs from the acknowledgment of One Who by His very Nature cannot but see, and cannot but requite, may form the beginning of that which will grow to loyal devotion. But this is not holy fear. Holy fear is a fear which dispels such fear. *Fear not, Moses said unto the people: for God is come.. that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.* Holy fear is the fear which shrinks from sin, and not the fear which comes of sin. It is the fear of losing righteousness, and not of bearing pain. It dreads the withdrawal of Him to Whom we look with trembling, trustful awe, and not the approach of Him whose advent may startle 'a guilty thing

surprised.' And no motive to effort I imagine has greater weight with a true loving, human heart than the desire to keep the affection of one who is known to be worthy of our completest reverence. No restraint from wrong-doing is more powerful than the anticipation of his grief at our failure. Let us then only think of evil as that which *grieves the Holy Spirit in Whom we were sealed*, and we shall learn to hate it, to shrink from it instinctively 'as we shrink from physical pain.' Such is holy fear.

Thus holy fear can protect us; and again holy fear can discipline us. There is always a danger, on which we have already touched, lest the outward form, the verbal definition should overpower the life to which they minister and bear witness. While we are what we are ritual and dogma are essential for us. And it has pleased GOD to consecrate worship by sacraments through which He shews that spiritual realities underlie all that is outward, and to bind all truth to Him Who is the Truth. Here then holy fear moves us to look beyond the visible, beyond the letter. It accepts with grateful humility the appointed rite, the moulded phrase, as means through which the Spirit

works, but never for one instant does it identify the sign with the thing signified, or the outline with the essence which the outline brings within the notice of human faculties. Holy fear knows that that which can be felt and seen and spoken, is not the very substance but an adumbration only of things invisible and heavenly. By the guidance of the Incarnate Word it can enter through the veil to the Divine Presence, dark with excess of light, and rest there, feeling the darkness and yet knowing that it is as the shadow of a great Rock which shelters us from a splendour too glorious for our eyes yet to bear.

And no one who regards the methods and the language of popular religion can doubt that we need this discipline of holy fear. Externality, earthliness, unlicensed dogmatism, rash familiarity in devotion, are not confined at the present time to any one party. They are our common temptation. It is indeed easy to construct an idol and a Christ after the flesh, and then to bring to that the kind of worship with which it corresponds; it is easy to construct a well-defined system of doctrine if we limit at our will the facts of which we take account.

It is easy, and therefore it cannot be the way of Christ. The holy fear with which the thought of His Life and Passion and Ascension fills us will spiritualise our worship and chasten our words. Looking to Him we shall rejoice that the vision of His living glory fills the whole earth and transcends it.

So look to Him, brethren, in His glorious Majesty. There is nothing which I desire more earnestly to impress upon you than this sense of the immeasurable vastness, of the inherent spirituality, of the living freedom of the Truth which is committed to you. Our English Church is, I believe, the noblest witness to it. You will not be able to reach with your individual sympathies to the full breadth of her capacity; but let no attractiveness of more definite dogma tempt you to narrow her bounds or to confuse them. Let no desire for theoretical completeness of religious views lead you to adjust by human speculations the antithetic teachings of Scripture which necessarily attach to all representations of the infinite in terms of our limited intelligence. We have yet much to learn which, as it seems to me, GOD is ready to teach Christendom through our own Communion, if we are faithful

to our call: lessons of criticism and physical science, lessons as to the duties of nations, lessons on the relations of social life. Ill will it be for us if by our littleness, our preconceptions, our self-assertion, we leave our work undone. The lessons will, at the best, be slowly learnt; yet we can begin to be learners, and the fresh condition for learning them is the devout welcome of that holy fear which recognises alike the infinite greatness of GOD and His purpose of love for men fulfilled in many ways.

And, yet once more, as we humbly strive to learn these lessons this holy fear will ennoble us. It will make every resting-place a Beth-el, and shew that GOD is in what seems to be a dreary, desolate wilderness though we knew it not. It will enable us to understand that laws of phenomena and conduct which we slowly trace are revelations of the will of Him Who calls us to be His fellow-workers, when we simply follow the path of unquestioning obedience. It will confirm to us, when we look upon the immeasurable vastness of life as we can see it, the hope which is alone adequate for our sorrows, that the counsel of GOD must triumph. It will cover the world and its fulness



with an atmosphere of sacredness. It will help us, each one in our common daily labours, to feel for and to find that which is eternal. It will train us by patience, by self-restraint, by self-questioning, by meditation, to interpret earth in the light of heaven, and not to darken heaven by the clouds of earth. It will bring to us the simplicity, the trust, the love, of children who contemplate often with unsatisfied wonder and yet without one doubt their Father's ways, that temper to which alone entrance into the heavenly kingdom is possible. It will take us out of ourselves, lift us above ourselves, and bring home to us every gift which we require for our Christian growth.

Holy fear, by which we recognise, dimly it may be yet most surely, the Presence of GOD about us, is a spring of knowledge; for *the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.*

Holy fear, by which we recognise the unsearchable purpose of GOD for the consummation of the world, is a power of progress; so the first Church *walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost was multiplied.*

Holy fear, by which we recognise the presence

of unseen spiritual powers about us, is an assurance of confidence: *the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him.*

Holy fear, by which we recognise the pure and purifying Majesty of Him in Whom we have our being, is an energy for our personal hallowing; therefore St Paul says: *let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

So may the Lord 'fill us with the spirit of His holy fear now and for ever'.

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Brethren, we have communed together on great truths. We have recognised that they must pass into action. We have seen, if from afar, something of the greatness and the opportunities of our calling. And if you have followed out the lines of reflection which I have endeavoured to indicate, you will feel, I think, that the faith which we have confessed, and the strength which is pledged to us, reach to every human faculty and circumstance and are adequate to hallow them.

You will feel that the Christian faith which you are charged to enforce is of life, in life, unto life, offered to us in its proclamation, and in its sphere, and in its end, as the fulfilment of man's destiny.

You will feel that the strength of the Spirit flows through the ordinary channels of work, of fellowship, of worship, according to our need and according to our effort, which is itself the appropriation of Divine grace.

You will feel that the Christian can be strong, nay that he must be strong, and, as I believe, alone strong, with a strength rational, progressive, enduring, universal.

You feel all this perhaps now ; but times of failure and depression will come hereafter. We can only be perfected in obedience through suffering. But when the sense of weakness is sorest turn again to the prayer which we have now sought once more to take to our hearts in the immediate prospect of a new blessing for a new work. As the days go on, with cloud and sunshine, turn to the prayer and blessing and listen to the words of the Apostle as the present commentary upon them : *ἐνδυναμοῦσθε ἐν Κυρίῳ* *be ye strengthened in the Lord.* Offer yourselves

to His influence: receive His power: use His inspiration.

Ἐνδυναμοῦσθε, not in a single supreme moment, not once for all, but day by day ever freshly while life lasts and according to the wants of life.

Ἐνδυναμοῦσθε ἐν Κυρίῳ.

VI.

*THE NECESSITY OF PROGRESS.*

Λοιπὸν οὖν ἀδελφοί, ἐρωτῶμεν ὑμᾶς καὶ παρα-  
καλοῦμεν ἐν Κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα καθὼς παρελάβετε  
παρ' ἡμῶν τὸ πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν  
θεῷ, καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε, ἵνα περισσεύητε μᾶλλον.

I THESS. iv. 1.

ADDINGTON CHURCH,

*4th Sunday in Advent 1888.*

WHEN we read the Epistles of the New Testament with a living sense of the circumstances under which they were written, we cannot fail to be struck by the swift and overwhelming effect of the Faith upon those who received it. The Thessalonians had not known the Gospel for more than a few months, when St Paul wrote to them and it had already become the rule and inspiration of their conduct. For you will observe in the R. V. that, according to the true text, the Apostle prefixes a testimony to his charge whereby the charge itself becomes more impressive and more far-reaching. '*We beseech you.....*', he says, '*that as ye received how ye ought to walk...even as ye do walk, that ye abound more and more.*' He interrupts the tenour of his exhortation to acknowledge the loyalty with which the young church had embodied his teaching in life. Their prompt and glad obedience gave force to his new appeal

Their proved faithfulness made progress possible for them, or, I would rather say, made progress necessary for them. And if it is difficult for us to realise the sudden transition through which the Thessalonians had passed from darkness to light, we can at least realise the truth which St Paul presses upon them, from their vivid experience, even that movement is the sign and the prerogative of life. Now as then it is a sure law that, as Luther said, 'he who *is* a Christian 'is no Christian.' He who thinks that he has gained the fulness of the Faith has lost it. Progress is a requirement of spiritual vitality; and the recompense of past progress is the assurance of progress to come. In the words of a famous Hebrew saying, 'The reward of a 'precept is a precept.' He, that is, who has fulfilled one commandment is allowed to receive another. He who has reached one height of truth catches a glimpse of a loftier height beyond. Each attainment in the Divine life becomes the occasion for a revelation of fresh duty. The crown of labour for a being such as man is not rest but longer and nobler toil. It is true, we know, that to him that hath more shall be given. And it is no less true that of him that hath done



much shall more be required. Each achievement of the successful worker was indeed God's gift. And what we receive, what we realise, what we gain—however we call the process—is not for contemplation, or for hoarding, but for further service. What is reaped supplies the seed-corn for a richer harvest. The gifts of GOD answer to His requirements and the requirements of GOD answer to His gifts. '*Grace for grace*'—grace to be used in return for grace already used—is the law which regulates GOD'S blessing: '*from strength to strength*' is the description of the Christian's course.

This then is the thought concerning your duty which I wish to commend this Morning, to you, my brethren, who are to be admitted to offices in the Church of Christ : this is the thought which I wish to commend also to the whole congregation which is gathered together to support you by their sympathy and prayers, the thought of the necessity of progress in the Christian life : the vital conviction that *as we have received how we ought to walk, even, if it be so, as we do walk, we should abound more and more*, reaching forth, as St Paul says in another place, towards that unattainable ideal which brings recompense to

effort by the ever-widening disclosure of its own infinite glory.

*That ye may abound more and more.* In order that we may feel the necessity of progress we must recognise the fulness and the conditions of life. Life, Christian life, is far richer and more fruitful than we commonly realise: richer in powers and opportunities: more fruitful in abiding and spreading consequences. There is indeed much in our circumstances which tends to hide from us the secret blessings, the fresh messages, the irrevocable issues, of the passing days. We are occupied, engrossed, distracted, by much serving. We hardly pause to consider what is the meaning or the tendency of that which we do, if we are busy with our appointed tasks according to any estimate of their scope. We do not sedulously inquire whether this is the use to which we—we severally—should turn our office, or our gift.

We assume that all must be well with us if we are vigorously employed. Then comes some space for quiet thought, some solemn season, some memorable change in our position, some fresh beginning; and there is at least the opportunity and the encouragement for self-question-

ing. Happy shall we be if at such a time we look around us, and if we look back: if we ask, with touched and trembling hearts, what we are, even in our own sight, for those with whom we hold formal or familiar intercourse: what we are to-day when compared with what we were five or ten or twenty years ago. Happy shall we be, though the survey reveals narrow isolation and deadness in the past, if it stirs us once again to take to ourselves the Apostle's charge; to recognise, while we deplore our neglect, what we must do and what we must be; to look with open eyes upon the fact of human influence, upon the need of Christian growth; to welcome as the divine will for us—unchanged and unchangeable by failure or achievement—that we *abound more and more*.

We must, I say, look with open eyes upon the fact of human influence. Each one of us is at every moment a source of spiritual forces. We are radiating unceasingly, so to speak, cold or heat, chilling or warming those with whom we come into contact, calling out sympathetic response by generous interest or sealing timid lips by proud reserve. So far we have no choice. The fact of our influence is independent

of our design. And it is fulfilled in many ways. It may be by the suppression or by the withholding, as well as by the perversion, of our endowments that we wrong our friends. It may be by self-restraint or by sacrifice, as well as by direct service, that we bless them. But in one way or other we all, the least no less than the strongest, enter as factors into life. We all help to make society what it is, public opinion what it is, our fellowmen what they are. We must be judged not only by what we do consciously but by all that incalculable sum of later results which without us would not have been. Onwards beyond the utmost range of our senses, onwards beyond the utmost flight of our thought, the stream of our influence flows to the end of time. And at each instant our influence is for every one of us the whole living self in which the past is gathered up.

It follows then that if our influence is to be healthy it must answer to a life, a growth, an effort. In order that we may fulfil our office in the vast system in which we are placed we must '*abound more and more.*' As Christians, as Christian teachers, we must both grow, and strive. We must embody the action of a vital

force which is not of ourselves, and we must make the force our own by the energy of faith. The power of growth into the likeness of GOD comes from Him only, but we on our part must see that the conditions of growth are satisfied. He gives us the right—it is a marvellous phrase—to become His children. In this final sense all is of His grace, and yet He claims that we should appropriate every free gift by the exertion of our responsible will. To this end there is need of calculated and resolute purpose. If our standard is low and our influence feeble, it is because we trust to spontaneous impulses and improvised endeavours at the moment when temptations and trials come. But in order that we may grow, we must habitually prepare ourselves for the entertainment of great thoughts, for the undertaking of difficult enterprises, for the support of unexpected disappointments.

We can see then that progress is necessary ; and we can see also that it is not easy to realise this unceasing energy of a growing life however needful it may be. Life is not and cannot be easy. It is enough for us to ponder the records of the Lord's human experience, Who *though*

*Son learned obedience through the things which He suffered* that we may know through what discipline our goal must be reached : enough to remember His *prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears*, that we may know that even for the sinless the victory over sin is not lightly won : enough to meditate on His Passion, towards which ruler and priest and apostle contributed, that we may know that perfect righteousness and truth and love do not at once reveal selfishness to itself and conquer it. The character of the conflict with indolence, with pain, with evil, will change ; but there is no promise that the blessing of converse with GOD will come unsought by prayer : no promise that the necessity for vigilant endurance will cease while the world lasts : no promise that right will prevail during the period of our advocacy.

Our progress then will be difficult, must be difficult ; and again it will not be equable. We might have expected that the Divine action would have been uniform on all who once yield themselves to it without reserve. But such is not GOD'S way. The first burst of Spring life, which clothes the field and the wood with the promise of flower and fruit, cannot continue

unchanged : the ripe glory of autumn is gathered for use and the land is left desolate. And so it is with men. Times of coldness and apparent barrenness follow times of warmth and joyful labour. We are inclined to be despondent and distressed. We forget that in the inner life also we are made perfect through patience, through suffering : that it would be a small thing to trust GOD if He always revealed His working : that the sense of loneliness calls into exercise the habit of faith.

It is indeed no paradox to say that we may measure our spiritual progress by the keenness of our self-distrust and self-dissatisfaction. Such feelings are a witness to the ideal towards which we are striving, and a confession of personal weakness which is the condition of strength. To be confident and satisfied is indeed to be dead. The man who limits his aim by his own power will fall far short of his destiny. And the man who regards his success complacently condemns himself to stationariness. Both alike set aside St Paul's command : *that we abound more and more.*

*That we abound more and more.* I have touched on the necessity, the difficulty, the

vicissitudes, of this progress. These thoughts will gain a new force if we consider what the end is towards which we are moving, even that we may grow like GOD, with a growth which, as we have seen, is painful and often (to our eyes) interrupted, that we may share in His holiness, that we may be made partakers of His nature. We profess, that heaven is our goal ; but heaven is the open presence of GOD ; and the presence of GOD can only bring joy by satisfying powers which have been disciplined to look upon it. No expectation can be vainer than that which looks for the source of happiness in outward circumstances. No change of position can transform the soul. Of every place where our feet rest in our pilgrimage the words are written for our learning : *This is none other than the house of GOD : this is none other than the gate of heaven.* Things affect us according to our own nature. It is impossible that we should delight in the vision of GOD hereafter unless we look to Him now, look to Him in joy no less than in sorrow, look to Him in nature and in history, look to Him in the Life of Christ and in the Mission of the Spirit ; look to Him and feel that He is looking to us : unless we follow with reverence every



revelation of His will and striving to trace afresh every line of that image in which we were made.

Again and again then it is forced upon us that as Christians we cannot rest in any attainment which we have reached. *We must abound more and more.* We must seek untiringly for signs of growing nearness to GOD and shew what we have found. The trained eye learns to see beauties which were once undistinguished. The trained ear learns to interpret voices which were once inarticulate. And is it so—do we confidently trust that it always will be so—spiritually with ourselves? Are we able as the years go on to fix our eyes more steadily on GOD, shrinking with livelier sensibility from sin more than from suffering, realising our fellowship one with another in Him with a more intense vividness, looking, and shewing that we look, beyond the wild confusion of the hour to the one Will of peace and righteousness which cannot at last want accomplishment? Are we able to listen to the Divine Wisdom conversing with us as with sons in the words of apostles and prophets, speaking to us in our own tongues, interpreting our own thoughts, answering the questions with which our own hearts are full? Are we able to

rest with increasing peace in the contemplation of Him Who is perfect light, and to bring before Him Who is perfect compassion the unceasing prayer of sympathetic remembrance for all with whom we are united as fellow-workers in the present and as fellow-heirs of the future? Are we able to pause in the solemn stillness of thought till we are alone with GOD, and to offer ourselves to the fire of His love; that so little by little all may be consumed in us—all passion and pride, all self-seeking and self-trust—which does not minister to His glory, which does not, that is, make clearer to men His infinite perfection? Are we able to regard the world in its unspeakable vastness, life with its inevitable sorrows, nature with its contrasts (to our eyes) of beauty and terror, or grace and mocking grotesqueness, as even now gathered up in Christ, and seek for ourselves the development of every faculty by which we may be taught to spell out better the One Name written in all that is finite?

We tremble perhaps as we put such questions to ourselves. But they stir us at least with a sense of what our Faith is. They make plain to us to what we are called. They shew an obligation to progress, a capacity for influence, of

which, it may be, we are habitually unmindful. They condemn us perhaps. But the sentence of condemnation is the message of hope. It is a revelation of GOD'S love as well as of man's failure. It is not left to us to create the life or the light. The strength for service and the opportunities for service are still given to us through the Gospel. Christ still bids us stretch out the withered hand, open the sightless eye, come forth from the very darkness of death: He bids us, and His command is a promise sufficient to transform our failures and our weaknesses.

As we take His command into our souls, we shall know the secret of growth, the secret of influence, the secret of happiness, which is growing conformity to GOD seen in Christ. By that change from glory to glory, the soul will be prepared for its consummation: by that change the proclamation of Christ Born, Crucified, Ascended, which we are charged to make, will be revealed to us as a victorious force: by that change we shall be moved from day to day by new powers answering to new desires, and guided through deeper wisdom to fresh fields of activity; so that we shall *abound more and more*, rising

ourselves to a fuller growth and raising others by the sight of the great things--not which we have done, but—which GOD hath done for us.

‘The great things which GOD hath done for us,’ yet not indeed for us as the end but that we may use every gift for the service of the Body in which we are members, and prove to the uttermost the breadth of their application. For we shall, I think, have perceived that it is a law of progress that we impart what we receive, and share what we reverence. We cannot move alone. Priest and people act and react one upon the other. They suffer together, they advance together. If it is true, as we all admit, that the priest must use for his people every grace of the Spirit, with which he is endowed, it is no less true that the people on their part must use for their priest that sevenfold gift which they too received by the Apostolic laying on of hands. To them also is entrusted a stewardship of sacred treasures by which those that have rule over them must be supported.

This truth, this vital truth, has, I think, been commonly overlooked; and there has followed naturally on the one side an assumption of

lordship and on the other side a suppression of spiritual force.

In a little while you, my brethren of the laity, will hear from their own lips how those who offer themselves for the Ministry regard their life's work and their calling ; you will hear their aim, their resolutions, their spring of confidence. And when you are afterwards required to pray for the fulfilment of their desires, I do not doubt that you will offer from your hearts those supplications to GOD for them which you feel are most rightly asked. But do not rest satisfied with the passing act. Let your present experience be the revelation of a continual duty. Welcome the command of the earliest manual of Christian practice, and 'let your prayer rise night and day 'for him that speaketh to you the word of life.'

And you, brethren, whom GOD has called to the Ministry of His Church, take from this most solemn day on which you receive your Great Commission the abiding assurance of the sympathy of the congregation of Christ's people, a sympathy which answers to the reality of one work, one life, fulfilled in many ways.

Take the conviction that those whom you serve are your fellow-workers, and that as you

claim most from their co-operation you will serve them best. Believe, and act as believing, that there is no way in which you can enforce the fact of Christian brotherhood more powerfully than by boldly requiring of others the sacrifices which you make yourselves.

Set before you the loftiest aim, and cherish the widest hope for yourselves and for men, dissembling no weakness within, and no misery without. It is not you but Christ in you who does His work. GOD loves the world with a wise and sovereign compassion which transcends our thoughts. The charter of our strength is *All things are possible to him that believeth*. And, when our hearts condemn us, the prayer which cannot fail is the simple cry of trembling devotion: *Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief*.

So believing, so praying, one for another, and each for all, we shall, GOD being our helper, *abound more and more*.

ὁ ἐναρξάμενος ἐπιτελεσει.

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